

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 547

By McNally

A RESOLUTION relative to the Barkley ultra marathon held in  
Frozen Head State Park in Morgan County.

WHEREAS, the Barkley ultra marathon, which has been held in Frozen Head State Park since 1985, is unquestionably one of the toughest 100-mile races in the world, as it features 52,900 feet of climb and an equal length of descent; and

WHEREAS, over the past 20 years, the Barkley and Frozen Head have become a Mecca for lovers of the great outdoors; the race attracts a diverse group of participants from all over the world who share in common a passionate love for the wilderness, challenge, and Frozen Head itself; and

WHEREAS, the fact that only six participants have completed the full 100 miles of the race within the 60-hour time limit during the past 20 years (over 600 attempts) speaks volumes about the unique character and extreme difficulty of the Barkley, as well as the inner fortitude, perseverance, and mental and physical discipline evidenced by its participants; and

WHEREAS, truly like no other place on earth, Frozen Head State Park provides a unique setting for this unique race; the park's monolithic mountains seem to pierce the jet stream, and temperatures can vary from 10-20 degrees or more from place to place, just as the weather can change completely within an hour from the valley to the ridgeline; and

WHEREAS, the park's perimeter trails, which were built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s, make Frozen Head and the Barkley a perfect match; built to the park's boundary lines on the map, and ignoring completely the park's rugged terrain, the steepness of Frozen Head's northern boundary trail makes it useless for normal backpacking or hiking; however, this same feature makes the trail perfect for people who love to climb mountains, namely the Barkley's participants; and

WHEREAS, as the race has grown in popularity, the Barkley's organizers have worked closely with the Division of Parks to prevent damage to sensitive ecological areas in Frozen Head by altering the race's route; the organizers have also restricted the number of participants to 35 and ceased to post notice of the event, relying solely on word-of-mouth publicity; and

WHEREAS, the close relationship between the race's organizers and state park personnel has helped to ensure that the Barkley's participants leave behind no permanent disfigurement of Frozen Head; and

WHEREAS, after 20 years of a mutually beneficial relationship, the Department of Environment and Conservation has recently informed the race's organizers that the Barkley can no longer be held at Frozen Head, citing the race as an "inappropriate use" of the park; and

WHEREAS, this General Assembly respectfully disagrees with the Department's decision, believing strongly that not only is the Barkley an appropriate use for Frozen Head, the race is a precious jewel of Tennessee's outdoor recreation culture that is well worth preserving; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that this Body hereby strongly urges and encourages the Department of Environment and Conservation, Division of Parks, to reconsider its decision and permit the Barkley ultra marathon to be held in Frozen Head State Park in 2006 and annually thereafter.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an enrolled copy of this resolution be transmitted to the Commissioner of Environment and Conservation.